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BLM ALASKA
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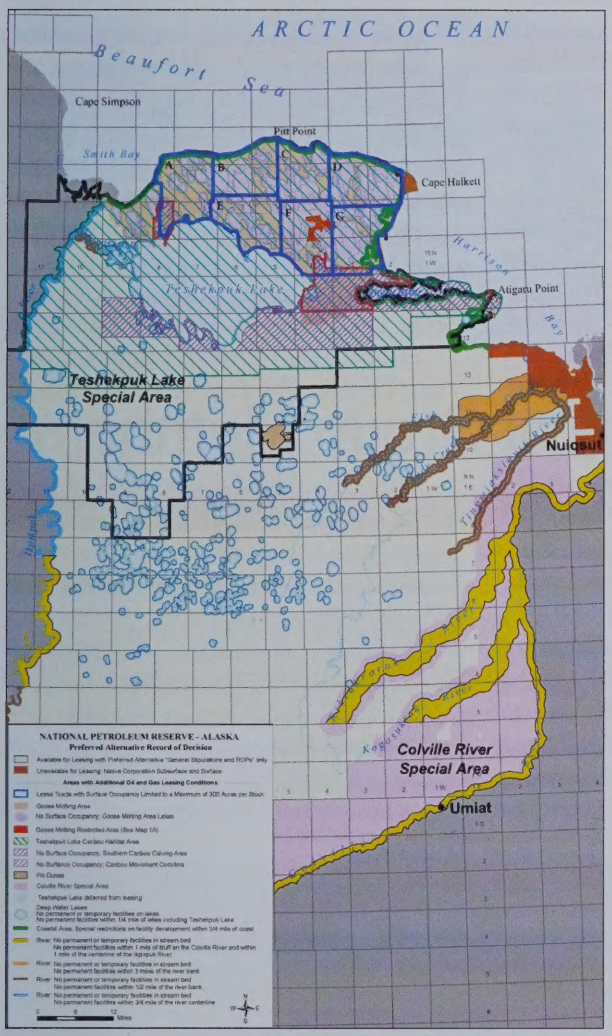
News about BLM-managed public lands in Alaska

BLM
Alaska

New plan approved for northeast corner of petroleum reserve



The Department of the Interior has approved a plan amendment for the northeast corner of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. The amendment, developed by BLM, will guide leasing, exploration and development in the petroleum reserve for the next 10 to 20 years using lease stipulations and required operating procedures similar to those adopted for the adjacent northwest area of the petroleum reserve in 2004.

The Record of Decision, signed in January, contains a number of changes to the *Final Amended Integrated Activity Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* released in January 2005. "As a result of comments from local government, North Slope residents, and various organizations, a number of modifications have been included specifically to benefit subsistence users and wildlife values in the northeast planning area," said BLM-Alaska State Director Henri Bisson.

Modifications to the final amended plan include:

• expanding the "No Surface Occupancy" restriction protecting sensitive goose molting habitat area north of Teshekpuk Lake from 217,000 to 242,000 acres.

• establishing an additional "No Surface Occupancy" restriction protecting 47,000 acres of important caribou habitat and calving area

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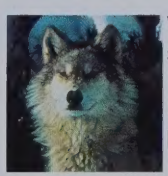

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Northeast Plan

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located southwest of Teshekpuk Lake. There are now approximately 188,000 acres of protection for caribou calving habitat southeast (141,000) and southwest (47,000) of the lake.

• establishing an additional "No Surface Occupancy" restriction protecting 9,700 acres for caribou movement northwest of Teshekpuk Lake. There are now approximately 54,700 acres of protection for corridors east (45,000 acres) and northwest (9,700 acres)

• requiring a formal workshop(s) with federal, state and local, North Slope Borough representatives, North Slope Science Initiative members and others to recommend ways to minimize the impact of pipelines on subsistence users and wildlife resources.

• deleting language that would consider applications for the construction of publicly funded community roads within the Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Habitat Area.

(above) **The winter 2005-06 drilling season saw only one company, FEX L.P. (a subsidiary of Talisman Energy, Inc.), active in the Petroleum Reserve.**

• requiring a minimum 3-year study focused on protecting molting geese that utilize the lakes north of Teshekpuk Lake. The study must be completed before BLM will authorize construction of any proposed permanent facilities within the Goose Molting Area.

• deferring leasing of the Colville River Special Area until a river management plan is completed.

"Subsistence activities in the planning area, particularly hunting and fishing, are exceedingly important to local residents. We have listened to their concerns and added these additional provisions to the plan to assure that local traditions can continue," said Bisson.

Other provisions of the plan, such as deferring leasing on Teshekpuk Lake remain unchanged.

The 75-page Record of Decision and accompanying maps are available for review on the BLM's website, www.ak.blm.gov.

BLM estimates that the Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska may contain as much as two billion barrels of economically recoverable oil. This decision opens the way for an additional oil and gas lease sale, probably in the fall of 2006; however, the decision is under appeal in federal district court.

Secretary appoints NSSI Technical Group Members

Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton has appointed 15 members to the North Slope Science Initiative (NSSI) Science Technical Group. Appointees are professionals from agencies, academia, businesses, local governments, and the public-at-large.

The NSSI Science Technical Group provides advice and recommendations to the North Slope Science Oversight Group on inventory, monitoring and research activities to assist in making informed land management decisions.

Members are appointed for 3-year terms on a staggered term basis with one-third of the members subject to appointment or reappointment each year. All 15 appointments began January 30, 2006, but initial appointments vary from one to three years. Members will be appointed or reappointed each year thereafter for 3-year terms. Science Technical Group members will serve only in their professional capacity and will not represent any group, agency or entity with whom they may be affiliated.

All NSSI Oversight Group meetings are open to the public. The NSSI is an inter-agency effort designed to provide a consistent approach to high-caliber science across the North Slope. The initiative seeks to increase collaboration at the local, state, and federal levels to address research, inventory and monitoring needs as they relate to energy development activities on the North Slope.

The Science Technical Group is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972. Information about the North Slope Science Initiative and announcements of future meetings can be found at www.northslope.org.

The members of the Science Technical Group are:

3 year terms

Arnold Brower, Sr., retired senior geologist, BP Exploration
Dirk Derksen, supervisory wildlife biologist, Alaska Science Center, USGS
Douglas Kane, professor of civil engineering and water resources, UAF
Robert Shuchman, vice-president, Altarum Institute
Matthew Sturm, global marine issues manager, US Army Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory

2 year terms

Gary Kofinas, assistant professor of resource policy and management, UAF
Sue Moore, principle oceanographer, Alaska Fisheries Science Center
Alvin Ott, biologist and operations manager, Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources
Robert Suydam, wildlife biologists, North Slope Borough
Kimberly Titus, deputy director, Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

1 year terms

Alison Cooke, senior geologist, BP Exploration
John Kelley, professor of marine science, UAF
Caryn Rea, senior staff biologist, ConocoPhillips Alaska
Dan Reed, biometrician, Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game
Bill Streever, geophysicist, BP Exploration

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Geophysical survey sheds light on mineral potential in southern part of Petroleum Reserve

BLM has completed an airborne geophysical survey of a 1,500-square-mile area in the southern portion of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) in the foothills of the Brooks Range.

The survey was carried out with a helicopter flying a sensor at a fixed distance above the ground along predetermined flight lines. The sensor measured the electromagnetic qualities of the underlying bedrock in the area. The results of the survey can be used to distinguish different rock types and also indicate mineral occurrences concealed by tundra.

The survey, done through a cooperative agreement with the State of Alaska division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys (DGGS), includes portions of the Howard Pass and Misheguk Mountain quadrangles and will provide information for a BLM resource assessment of the southern NPR-A. BLM selected the area to be flown and provided funding, while the DGGS oversaw the bid solicitation, contractor selection and field survey.

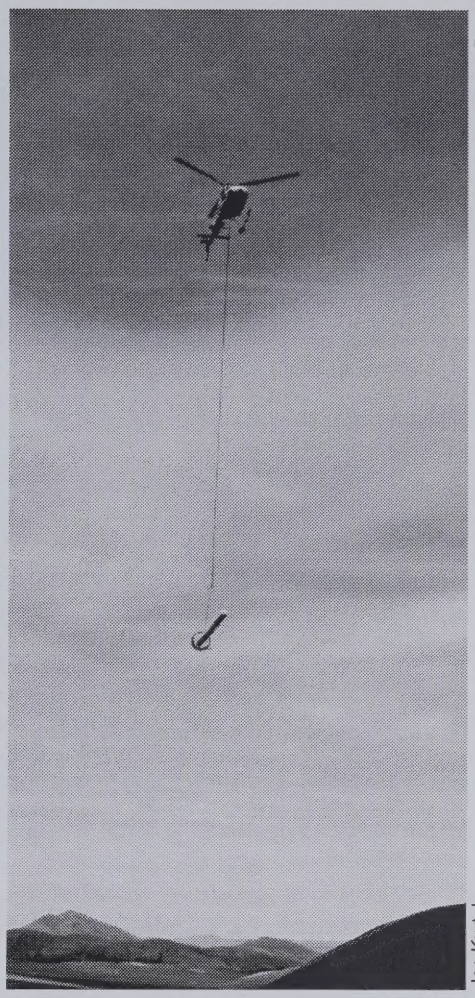
The southern NPR-A contains 22 documented mineral occurrences including deposits of lead, zinc, silver, barite and phosphate. Mineralization at Drenchwater Creek contains up to 14 percent combined lead-zinc with some silver. "This deposit occurs in the same rock type which hosts Red Dog, the world's largest zinc deposit found about 114 miles to the southwest," said BLM geologist Joe Kurtak.

Other geologists estimate there may be up to 29 million tons of barite comparable in grade to deposits currently being mined in the western U. S. Barite is an important component of drilling mud.

This survey is part of BLM's ongoing mineral resource assessment program to determine the type, amount, and distribution of mineral deposits on public lands throughout Alaska. The mineral assessment program is authorized by Section 1010 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. For more information on the mineral assessments program, contact Earle Williams at (907) 271-5762.

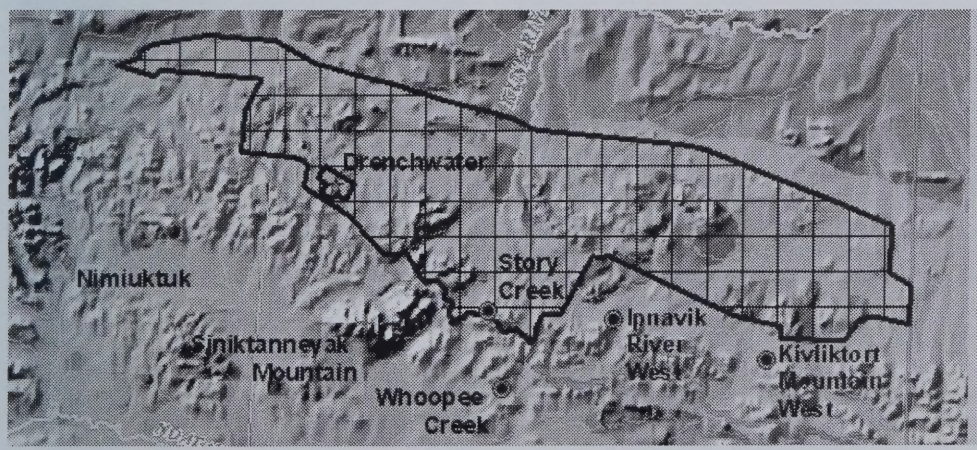
"The petroleum reserve has been closed to mineral entry since it was established in 1923, so congressional action to open the area would be necessary before any development could occur," said Susan Childs, a BLM team leader for the southern NPRA planning team. The team is developing and analyzing information that will assist in developing a range of alternatives for a draft planning document and environmental impact statement to be released in 2008. Whether the plan will deal with hard rock mineral issues has yet to be determined.

— Joe Kurtak



Joe Kurtak

(above) **Sensors measure electromagnetic qualities that can help locate concealed mineral deposits.**



Project area north of the Brooks Range.

The survey products can be inspected and purchased from DGGS, 334 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709 and from the DNR Public Information Center, 550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1260, Anchorage, AK 99501, tel. (907) 269-8400. Mail orders should be sent to the Fairbanks DGGS office.

The products are also available for inspection at the Alaska Resources Library and Information Services, 3211 Providence Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508 (tel. 907-272-7547) and the Historical Collection of the Alaska State Library in the State Office Building in Juneau.

Objects of Antiquity

Celebrating the Centennial of the Antiquities Act of 1906

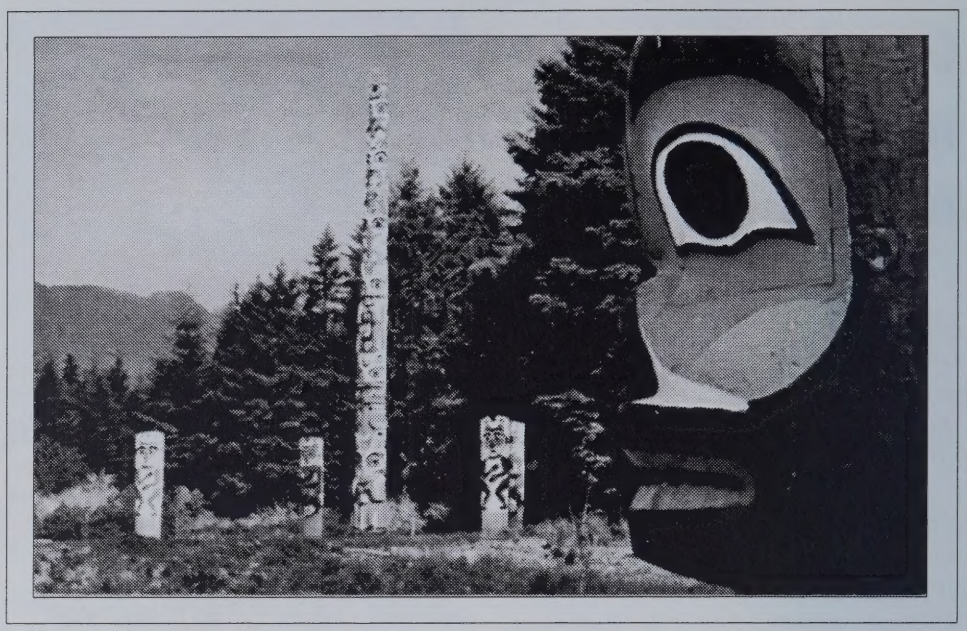


Photo courtesy of Robert King

One hundred years ago in 1906, Congress passed the Antiquities Act. It was signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt as the first federal legislation to recognize the importance of protecting "any historic or prehistoric ruin or monument, or any object of antiquity situated on lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States." Formally known as "An Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities," this law is the basic legislation that enables BLM and other federal agencies to protect and preserve archaeological and historic properties on federal lands.

The Antiquities Act was a watershed piece of legislation in the early 20th century. It came at a time when the frontier era had ended and people were concerned that many of the country's resources, such as its forests, were not infinite and needed protection or they would disappear. Some archaeological sites and historic buildings had already been preserved in the United States, but those were done through private or state initiative. For example, George Washington's home, Mount Vernon, was initially saved by private efforts. But some leaders felt that more effort was needed as the country was undergoing rapid change and development.

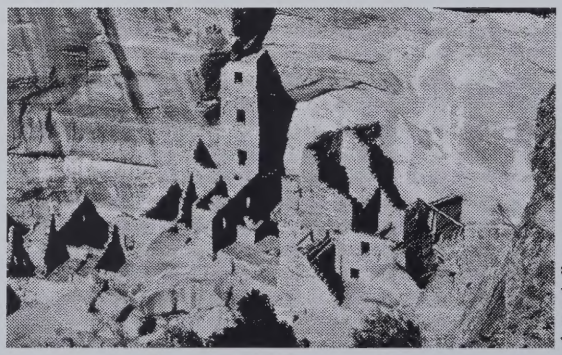
In some areas, such as the Southwest, tourism was increasing. Previously remote and little-seen places on federal land with monumental ruins left by past people were being increasingly impacted. Until the Antiquities Act was passed in 1906, such places were open to artifact hunting with the federal government not asserting any specific claim of ownership. That led to sometimes wanton destruction of archaeological sites, the news of which helped fuel a growing movement in the nation. People supported the federal government stepping in to help save such one-of-a-kind places before they disappeared.

With the passage of the Antiquities Act, a new philosophy prevailed with the federal government laying claim to such resources and beginning a program for their management and use that continues to evolve today. After the act passed, it was illegal to remove objects of antiquity from federal lands without federal permission.

As to specifics of the Antiquities Act, this important law for the first time allowed the federal government to issue permits for scholarly use of cultural properties and to impose criminal penalties for unauthorized use. The Antiquities Act also empowered the president to designate outstanding federal lands as national monuments for long-term preservation of their natural or cultural resources and scientific values.

Specifically, it allowed the president "to declare by public proclamation historic landmarks, historic and

Photo courtesy of Robert King



Anne Jefferey

(top) **1950s-era Sitka postcard of Alaska's first national monument, proclaimed in 1910.** (above left) **President Theodore Roosevelt is usually remembered for his efforts to save America's forests, but he also signed the Antiquities Act and other "progressive" legislation in the early 20th century.** (above right) **Artifact collecting at Mesa Verde and other locations, widely publicized in the press, furthered public demands for federal action to protect historic and cultural resources.** (page 5 top) **Antiquities Act 100th year Anniversary poster.** (See page 11.)

prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States to be national monuments."

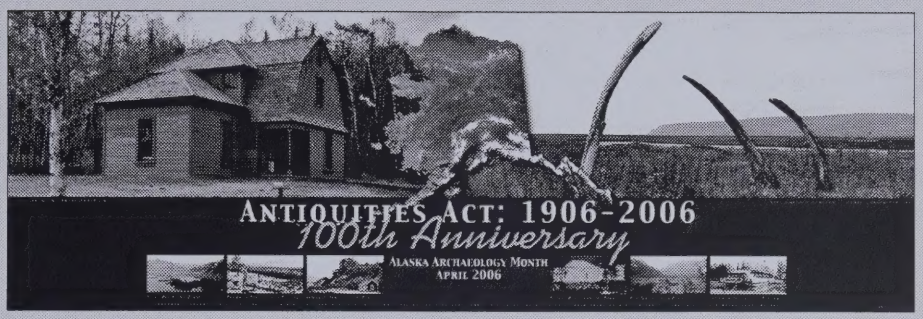
In Alaska, the first use of the Antiquities Act to protect a specific historical or prehistoric site was by President William Howard Taft who, in 1910, proclaimed Alaska's first national historic monument at Sitka. It is now called the Sitka National Historic Park. President Taft was impressed that the site commemorates the 1804 Battle of Sitka, the last major conflict between Europeans and Alaska Natives. Following President Taft, other presidents proclaimed additional national monuments in Alaska and throughout the United States. President Carter's use of the 1906 Act to withdraw millions of acres of federal land in Alaska in 1978 caused much local controversy at the time.

While BLM has no national monuments in Alaska under its jurisdiction in 2006, the agency manages many other significant areas of archaeological or historic importance that are authorized under later preservation laws that were passed following the 1906 Act. Many of these derive from the comprehensive National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, one of the "children" of the 1906 Act. This strengthened the ways in which the federal government could achieve the earlier vision and broad purposes set out in the earlier Antiquities Act now 100 years old.

With the passage of time, we now realize the 1906 Antiquities Act is the cornerstone for today's comprehensive federal program that serves to protect and preserve many of our nation's outstanding and irreplaceable prehistoric and historic treasures for present and future generations.

— Robert King

http://www.ak.blm.gov/ak930/antiquities/index.html



Antiquities Act Centennial Projects for BLM-Alaska

BLM is funding a number of highly visible cultural resources projects throughout Alaska. Here are this year's top five projects.

Non-Commissioned Officer's Quarters, Fort Egbert

Restoration work will continue on the Non-Commissioned Officer's Quarters building at Fort Egbert in the National Historic Landmark District at Eagle, Alaska. Previous restoration of one-third of the building's interior was funded through a Save America's Treasures grant received in partnership with the Eagle Historical Society and Museums. Additionally, BLM installed a new roof in 2003. Remaining restoration will follow recommendations outlined in a detailed NCO Building Condition Assessment. Once the repairs are completed, public access will resume through guided tours.

Iditarod Wayside Signs

This project aims to improve recognition and understanding of local Alaskans about the importance of the Iditarod National Historic Trail to more than two dozen communities along the 900-mile route. This spring, a pilot project will place interpretive panels that explain Iditarod history in five communities . The project also marks the kick-off of the Iditarod Trail Community Legacy Project to identify additional interpretive signs, displays, and other historic outreach opportunities. For more information about the historic trail, see www.ak/blm/gov/iditarod.

Campbell Tract World War II Interpretation

This project will develop four information panels to interpret the visual remainders of World War II found on the Campbell Tract in Anchorage. The Campbell Tract was originally the home of the Campbell Garrison during the war and served as a satellite airfield for Fort Richardson. The footprint of the military installation is still visible and includes taxiways, aircraft parking areas, foxholes and concrete foundations. Increased public visitation for both recreation and environmental education provides an opportunity to interpret this history. See www.ak.blm.gov/ado/ctfhist-1.html.

Talkeetna Airstrip Interpretation

New interpretive signage will describe the importance of early aviation in the exploration and settlement of southwestern Alaska including the Talkeetna Airstrip. The Talkeetna Airstrip is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The history of aviation in Alaska is of particular interest to the local community.

Project Archaeology Teacher Workshop

This project will fund one Project Archaeology workshop in Alaska in 2006 for teachers. Teachers will be trained to use special Project Archaeology enrichment lessons in their classrooms to supplement regular curriculum. This project responds to the high demand for archaeological outreach in Alaska's schools.

Kevin Keeler

By this time each spring, snow machine riders have developed miniature networks of temporary trails across the Alaskan landscape, stretching miles and miles into vast, unpopulated environments.

Until recently, few people paid much attention.

Maybe some of our four-footed friends have.

(above) **North Fork Chena River Trail, Fairbanks North Star Borough. View north to Steese National Conservation Area.**

Howard Golden, regional furbearer biologist for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) South Central Region, has looked at the wolf population for years in the Nelchina area of the greater Copper River Basin, just east of Eureka. Wolves were collared and data started to come back showing that wolves were using snowmachine trails. Researchers began asking, to what extent are wolves using trails? When? Are wolves increasing their chances of finding moose or caribou by using trails? Are they saving energy by using trails?

These questions led to a cooperative study by Golden, ADF&G biologist Todd Rinaldi, and Dr. Katherine Parker, an associate professor with the University of Northern British Columbia. Their study, Winter Movement Strategies of Wolves in Relation to Human Activity and Resource Abundance, funded by BLM and ADF&G, is now in its second and final season. The study is looking at several factors that may affect predation of moose by wolves, with a specific look at human trail systems.

"Most Alaskans know that several passes by a snow machine can create a trail sturdy enough to hold humans," says Rinaldi, the lead researcher on the project. "This research asks whether these hard packed trails have any impacts on wolves, their distribution, or a wolf pack's ability to search for prey."

"Studies have found wolves to travel linearly along established routes in low vegetation areas and along windswept ridges or frozen waterways to facilitate their ease of travel," Rinaldi explains. "We also

Kari Rogers

(above) **Transmitters on wolf collars report the animal's location at 15-minute intervals.**

know that wolves prefer to travel through shallow snow in single file, creating a hard-packed network of trails that conserves energy across the entire pack. As snow depth increases, wolves have been known to alter travel routes to find hard-packed snow to increase travel efficiency."

This study established two areas for analyzing trails and wolf activity in order to look at wolf behavior where very little snow machine activity occurs as well as an area where varying degrees of human activity occur. Originally the two study areas extended north of the Glenn Highway all the way to the Susitna drainages in the Alphabet Hills. But, in response to state-sponsored same-day airborne predator management, the control area had to be moved south of the Glenn Highway. "We were losing too many collared wolves in Game Management Unit 13," remarks Rinaldi. "However, very little snow machine traffic occurs south of the highway, so it actually makes an excellent location to compare the difference in trails on these systems."

Snow machine trails were mapped and identified for their type of use. Counters are placed on some of the most prominent trails to determine the extent of use and to establish which trails receive high, medium or low amounts of traffic each year. This data is then mapped.

The alpha male and female wolves of packs within the study area are collared each season allowing their locations to be recorded every 15 minutes via global positioning system technology. This data helps identify wolf travel routes and patterns of use on routes such as time of day traveled, number of days on a particular route and also allows the detection of any seasonal or weekly patterns of use by wolves at a highly detailed resolution.

Predation events along these routes are mapped as well. In late spring, a blood sample is taken from each wolf to get a signature of what it has been eating. These results can be matched with predation events to develop a better understanding of the seasonal variations in wolves' diets.

Snow characteristics, such as depth, density and hardness, are recorded to determine what may factor into a wolf's ability to move across unpacked snow or its decision to use a trail. Hardness on trails is compared to the hardness of off-trail snow.

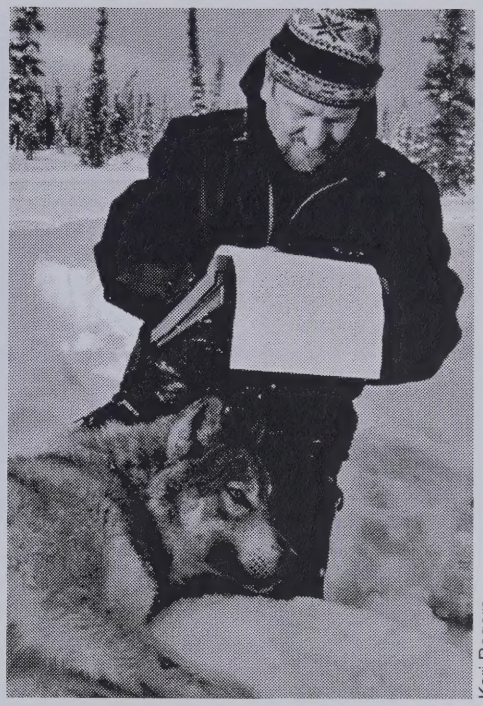
All data is layered on top to see if any correlations exist. These data sets could help identify some important behavioral patterns of wolves that biologists can utilize in future research and in making management decisions.

"Subsequent research is needed to further determine the complex relationships at play between human activity and the predator/prey relationship between wolves and moose," cautions Rinaldi. "Presently we are looking at how moose fit in, but not how moose are using trails. Use of trails by moose, particularly in late winter when they tend to be most physically stressed, should be researched."

"Moose may be using trails more to escape predators or they may be avoiding trails to escape both predators and human activity," Rinaldi hypothesizes. "If moose avoid trails in deep snow years, this could benefit wolves. Deep snow precludes moose movement, but deep snow usually acts as an aid for wolves when capturing moose for prey."

The U.S. Forest Service, in cooperation with ADF&G, will formally begin a similar study on the northern Kenaii Peninsula within the Chugach National Forest next fall.

— Marnie Graham



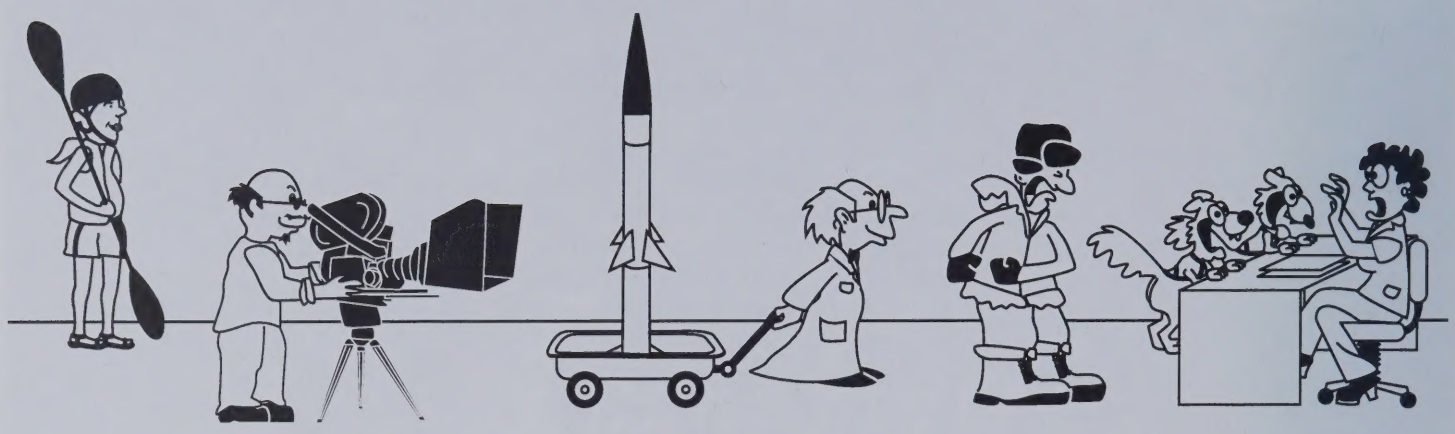
Kari Rogers

(above) **Howard Golden records data from a collared wolf.**

(below) **Caribou and wolves use wind swept ridgetops for easier winter travel.**

Dennis Green

Permitting Alaska



Everyday someone walks into a BLM office with a request to use the public land. Alaska provides a stage for unusual permit requests unlike anywhere else.

From mushing to movies to mushroom picking, you just might need a permit if you're headed for public lands.*

The entire process, performed locally at the field office, lets BLM evaluate a proposal, set fees or bonds (if any), and develop measures to protect the land. If an environmental analysis is necessary, there are opportunities for public comment. Proposals generally fit into broad categories such as events or commercial activities. Some may have elements of both.

Events usually involve recreational activities. Take dog mushing. Virtually all the major races cross BLM-managed public lands. Former Anchorage Field Office recreation planner Jake Schlapfer issued permits for the Iditarod race for years. He says BLM typically attaches stipulations for trail cleanup, trail marker placement and removal, and use of certified weed-free bedding straw. Snowmachines assist with trail grooming so there are also requirements for fuel storage.

In recent years, race management has increased in complexity because the Iron Dog and Alaska Ultra Sport races use parts of the course as well. "We now have a pre-event meeting with officials from all three events so we can coordinate logistics. The three events occur in sequence so there are ways they can help each other out and even save some money," says Schlapfer.

In the lower 48, BLM issues permits for motorcycle races. In Alaska, it's snowboard championships, Extreme Skiing competition in Thompson Pass, and Arctic Man races near Summit Lake.

Carole Huey, a realty specialist for BLM's Central Yukon Field Office, says the permit process is a win-win-win situation with benefits for the applicant, the land and the public.

"What I like about it is I can find answers and be consistent with everyone. It triggers an environmental analysis that lets us identify and mitigate impacts on other resources. We also check to make sure the proposal is consistent with our current land use plan.

Marnie Graham

(above) **Musher Thomas Lesatz moving straw stockpile at Sourdough Campground during the Copper Basin 300 sled dog race. Races are switching to certified weed-free straw to avoid spreading non-native plants along race routes.**

The whole thing ties back to our stewardship role for managing the land."

Commercial activities include a wide variety of activities in Alaska during both winter and summer. River guides, hunting camps, and wilderness schools all need permits to use the public lands. One of the fastest growing activities is "helicopter assisted tourism" which often involves visiting a glacier for short hikes or even mushing a dog team. Public lands outside Juneau, Skagway and Haines are hot spots.

Schlapfer says some areas are now reaching saturation levels, "We have seen 4,700 landings a summer in the Skagway area and new operators want in on the action." He says BLM has turned down some proposals because the community did not support further increases in flights. Last year BLM's Glennallen Field Office denied an application for using the Yanert Glacier in the Alaska Range after the public raised concerns about noise and impacts to wildlife.

However, BLM has been permitting helicopter operations at Thompson Pass since 2002. Public meetings in Valdez held as part of the environmental analysis have kept the public informed. The permitting process is complicated because of the checkerboard pattern of state, private and federal land involved.

Glenallen Field Office recreation planner Denton Hamby says BLM is mainly responsible for regulating ski runs on the mountaintops while the State of Alaska handles the base staging area. Permit stipulations mandate crews give avalanche safety, helicopter safety and emergency rescue briefings to passengers. The area also has been used for high alpine training school seminars to teach snow survival and camping.

Tourism also includes the traditional motor tours which now have segmented into large bus tours and small van tours. Both the Glennallen Field Office and Fairbanks District Office issue permits to several tour companies to use BLM overlooks, trails, visitor centers and outhouses.

Other commercial activities focus on harvesting products such as morel mushrooms following our two record-breaking fire seasons. And last year BLM received an atypical application from an Anchorage company to commercially harvest blueberries for pharmaceutical products. Local people felt there would be an impact on one of the few remaining road-accessible harvest areas, many of which had been burned over by fires. "We came to the same conclusion on our own and never went into the environmental analysis phase," said Huey, and the proposal was withdrawn.

One of the most exciting commercial activities includes the filming of movies, commercials and television shows. The proliferation of cable TV channels has driven the need for fresh programs to an all time high. Alaska, with its snow, ice, interesting characters and dramatic scenery, draws its share of proposals. In recent years there have been episodes filmed for the Outdoor Life Channel, numerous commercials, and even a Steven Segal movie filmed near Worthington Glacier. Recently a German television station did a show about interesting people living along the Dalton Highway.

(above) **Dave Mushovic monitors the filming of the 1994 movie *On Deadly Ground* at Thompson Pass. *Leaving Normal*, *Star Trek*, and numerous commercials and TV shows have also been filmed. Commercial film permits are required.**

"If a company is going to use a helicopter, we stipulate minimum flight heights to ensure there are no impacts to wildlife or migratory areas. We'll specify fuel refueling procedures for safety and make sure flights don't disrupt recreation traffic along highways," says Huey.

Having BLM Alaska employees involved also can keep applicants out of trouble, provided they listen to the advice. Former Glennallen Field Office realty specialist Dave Mushovic recalls, "I issued a permit for a commercial up at the old pipeline camp at Summit where they wanted to film a high performance luxury car plowing through the snow at high speed.

"I warned them that the nice smooth field they were thinking about using was actually full of boulders covered by 6 feet of snow. They did it anyway and sure enough hit a nice big rock and tore up the bottom of a very expensive car. They had to use the backup car to complete the shoot.

"It was interesting because there was a bear out circling the area and they were all afraid to get out of their cars. They also were dressed very stylishly for LA and froze their butts off."

* Sections 302 and 501 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act direct BLM to regulate the use of the public lands as part of its public stewardship role.

Frontier Flashes

Late-breaking news from around Alaska

James Higgins

(above) Venetie firefighters.

BLM and Alaska Natives sign annual funding agreement

BLM's first Annual Funding Agreement was recently signed with the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG). Under the agreement, CATG would perform preseason refresher training and testing services for Emergency Firefighters (EFF) within Alaska's Upper Yukon Zone.

"We are looking forward to working with the CATG and the EFF this year," said BLM Alaska Fire Service Upper Yukon Zone Fire Management Officer Kent Slaughter. "We hope that the potential for more opportunities for refresher training and pack testing will lead to an increase in the pool of available emergency firefighters in the zone."

The CATG is an Alaska consortium composed of the Artic Village Council, Beaver Village Council, Birch Creek Village Council, Canyon Village, Chalkyitsik Village Council, Circle Village Council, Native Village of Fort Yukon, Rampart Village Council, Stevens Village Tribal Council, Venetie Village Council and Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government.

Under provisions of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, qualifying tribes may request to perform activities administered by the Department of the Interior that are of geographic, historic or cultural significance to the participating tribe making the request.

According to the agreement, the CATG will provide preseason wildland fireline refresher training and work capacity testing by May 30 for EFFs for at least the following communities: Arctic Village, Beaver, Birch Creek, Chalkyitsik, Circle, Fort Yukon, and Venetie.

"This is an excellent opportunity to work with our partners while improving fire preparedness and we hope to begin soon," said Slaughter.

Formal discussions began last May between the AFS and CATG, and the agreement was signed on Dec. 21, 2005. It is currently in Washington, D.C., for final review.

— Kevin L. McIver

The Alaska State Senate has passed a bill that would lift the state ban on off-highway vehicles along the **Dalton Highway** north of the Yukon River. The bill has now moved to the House where it has been assigned to the Transportation Committee for hearings. If the bill passes, there will likely be provisions for BLM to plan for the changes. BLM has submitted a budget request and has preliminary plans for developing a comprehensive off-highway vehicle plan in partnership with the state and the Toolik Lake Research Station, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. and the public.

BLM is participating as a cooperating agency with the Federal Railroad Administration and the Federal Transit Authority on an environmental analysis for a proposed **realignment the Alaska Railroad tracks near Eileson AFB**. BLM will also review an environmental impact statement for another proposal to extend the railroad to Fort Greely; this document is expected to be released in the fall.

BLM, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Ahtna, Inc. are continuing discussions for a permanent solution for the **Klutina Lake Road 17b easement**; the road has been severely damaged by erosion and is unsafe. DOT is gathering cost estimates and hopes to complete a temporary bypass for the upcoming summer travel season.

BLM Glennallen Field Office has developed new interpretive panels for the boat launches at **Tangle Lakes Campground** and the newly renovated Delta River Wayside. The panels will be installed this summer. BLM will also install trailhead register stand panels along the Denali Highway.

Free archaeology poster. During April, BLM offices throughout the state will be distributing copies of the Archaeology Month poster (see photo at top of page 5).

Chilkoot Recordable Disclaimer Signed: BLM issued the first recordable disclaimer of interest of the new year to the State of Alaska when State Director Henri Bisson signed a disclaimer on February 1, 2006, stating the federal government has no valid interest to the lands underlying the lower Chilkoot River, Chilkoot Lake, and 10 miles of the upper Chilkoot River.

Iditarod National Historic Trail Partnership Efforts: The Anchorage Field Office, Chugach National Forest, and nonprofit Iditarod National Historic Trail, Inc. cooperatively produced and will soon install interpretive panels in the rural communities of Knik, McGrath, Galena, Unalakleet and Nome. The project kicks off a partnership with other federal, state and local agencies and groups to update the Interpretive Plan for the trail. BLM and Iditarod NHT, Inc. are also pursuing a partnership with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources to dedicate legal public access to currently unreserved sections of the trail that cross state lands. While BLM is lead administrator for the Iditarod, the trail system crosses other jurisdictions and is managed under a cooperative management plan with those entities.

PLANNING UPDATES

The **White Mountains RMP Amendment** will re-define monitoring criteria to increase BLM's flexibility to manage the recreation area. A draft will be released for public comment in mid-March.

The Glennallen Field Office will release the **East Alaska Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final EIS** in April. The two-volume document will reflect public comments received during a 90-day public comment period plus editorial changes and improved GIS data. A summary of all changes will be included at the beginning of the document. The RMP/EIS also will be posted on the BLM Glennallen Field Office website; interested individuals can obtain a written copy on CD by contacting the field office. A governor's 60-day consistency review will follow the release of the proposed plan.

The Fairbanks District Office is finalizing the **Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Draft Resource Management Plan/EIS** for approximately 13 million acres of public land in northwestern Alaska. A *Federal Register* notice announcing availability of the draft document and a 90-day public comment period is expected to be published in late April. Recreation management in the Squirrel River is the biggest issue to be resolved by the plan.

Edward Bovy

(above) **Low snow levels once again shortened the ceremonial start of the Iditarod race March 4. BLM facilities at Campbell Tract in Anchorage hosted mushers, race volunteers and the public at the end of an 11-mile run. The Tract is an excellent vantage point to observe the dog teams and mushers up close, away from the crowds found in downtown Anchorage.**

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Frontier Flashes

Doug Ballou

(right) **An estimated 425 people attended the third annual Winter Trails Day in February at the Campbell Creek Science Center in Anchorage. The event has doubled in popularity each year and provides an opportunity for families to enjoy a variety of winter activities.**

Before thinning

After thinning

Brian Sterbenz

In January, the Anchorage Field Office completed a **fuel reduction project on a 40-acre parcel** of BLM-administered lands off Kalifornsky Beach Road in Kenai. A contractor removed approximately 340 cords of dead and down beetle kill spruce. The lands are surrounded by residential subdivisions which could be threatened by wildland fires. Removal of the dead spruce reduced the fire risk and improved the health of the forest. The Kenai Peninsula Borough and area residents strongly supported the project. The Forest Stewardship Program is part of the President's Healthy Forests Initiative which allows contractors to keep wood products as partial payment for fuels reduction work.

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